

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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P R 230830Z MAR 78

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 24

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 2359

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, KS

SUBJ: CHURCHES BECOME INVOLVED IN LABOR DISPUTE

1. A DISPUTED LOCAL UNION ELECTION AT THE TONGHIL TEXTILE PLANT OF INCHON HAS ATTRACTED THE ATTENTION OF HIGH LEVELS OF THE KOREAN CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS. THE ELECTION (FEB 26) IN WHICH A SLATE OF CANDIDATES RELATED TO THE URBAN INDUSTRIAL MISSION (UIM) PARTICIPATED, WAS MARKED BY VIOLENCE AND INTIMIDATION (EVEN TO THE DEGREE THAT SOME UIM SUPPORTERS WER DOUSED WITH HUMAN EXCRETEMENT). THE NATIONAL TEXTILE WORKERS UNION, ACTING ON REPORTS OF THE DISORDERLY ELECTION, INTERVIEWED THE LOCAL UNION AND INSTALLED AN APPOINTED BOARD. THE UIM FACTION WANTS THE INTERVENTION RESCINDED AND FREE ELECTIONS HELD.

2. TO CALL ATTENTION TO THEIR CAUSE THE WORKERS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UIM (ALL GIRLS) DEMONSTRATED AT THE FKTU LABOR DAY CONVOCATION ON MARCH 10, AND HELD SIT-INS AND FASTS AT SEVERAL CHURCHES AND AT THE KNCC HEADQUARTERS. THE LONGEST SIT-IN WAS AT THE MYONGDONG CATHEDRALS IN SEOUL WHICH
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THE GIRLS LEFT IN THE AFTERNOON OF MARCH 23.

3. THE UIM CLAIMED THAT THE TONGHIL COMPANY, THE NATIONAL TEXTILE WORKERS UNION, THE FKTU, AND THE ROKG WERE CONSPIRING AGAINST THEM TO PREVENT THEIR FREE CHOICE OF LOCAL UNION OFFICERS. IT IS QUITE LIKELY THAT NONE OF THESE ORGANIZATIONS IS WELL DISPOSED TO THE UIM, BUT

THE ISSUES AT THE PLANT ARE COMPLEX, INVOLVING AMONG OTHER THINGS NATIONAL TEXTILE UNION INTERNAL POLITICAL RIVALRIES, EXCLUSION OF MALE EMPLOYEES FROM UNION LEADERSHIP BY THE UIM FACTION, DISAGREEMENT AMONG WORKERS OVER TACTICS, AND THE MANAGEMENT'S DESIRE TO HAVE A MORE RESPONSIBLE UNION LEADERSHIP TO DEAL WITH.

4. THE KNCC AND THE KCIA HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT OVER THE ISSUE. THE KNCC ISSUED A STATEMENT PROTESTING AGAINST THOSE WHO WOULD CALL THE UIM A COMMUNIST ORGANIZATION, CALLING ON THE ROKG TO RELEASE ANY PERSONS DETAINED BECAUSE OF INCIDENTS RELATED TO THIS CASE AND PROPOSING DISCUSSION OF THE ISSUE AFTER A JOINT FACT-FINDING MISSION STUDIED THE DETAILS OF THE LABOR DISPUTE. THE KCIA REPORTEDLY WELCOMED THE KNCC'S ASSISTANCE IN HELPING TO MEDIATE THE DISPUTE.

5. COMMENT. THE MACHINERY HAS BEEN SET UP FOR PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE TONGHIL DISPUTE, BUT THE EXTRAORDINARY INDIGNITIES TO WHICH SOME MEMBERS OF THE UIM FACTION WERE SUBJECTED HAVE AROUSED PASSIONS WHICH COULD FLARE UP AGAIN.
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